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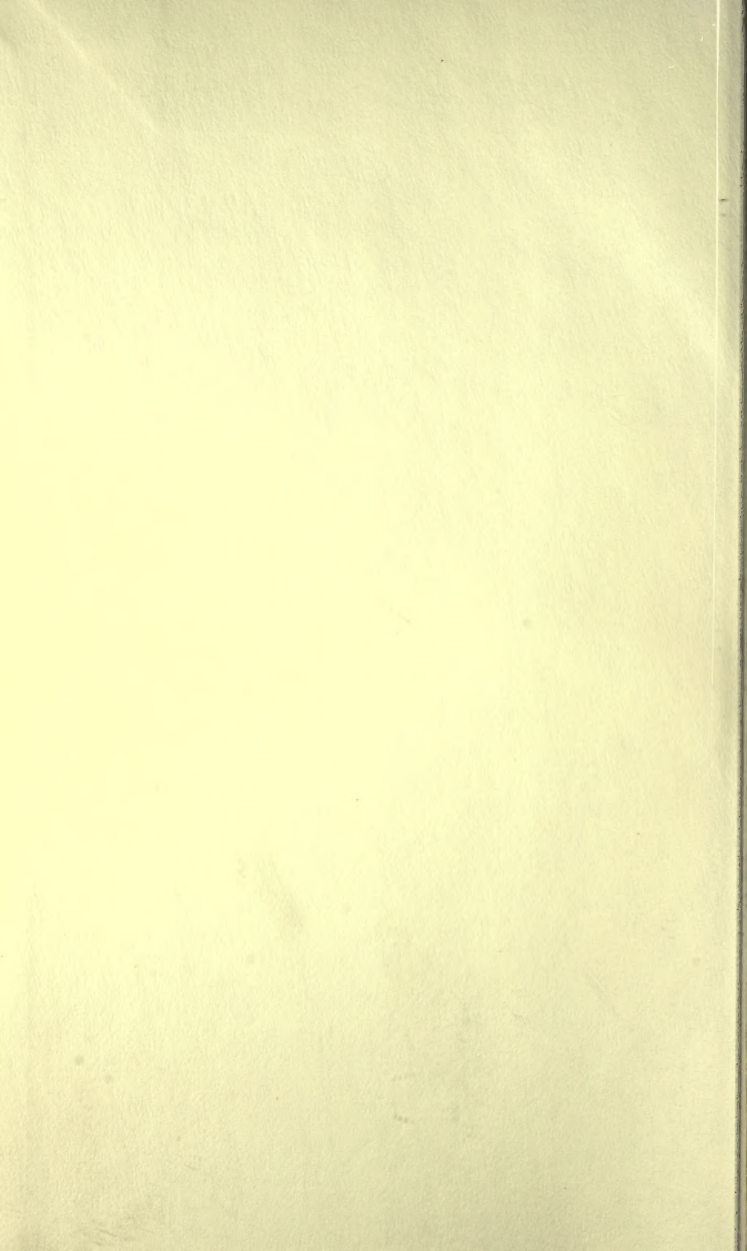
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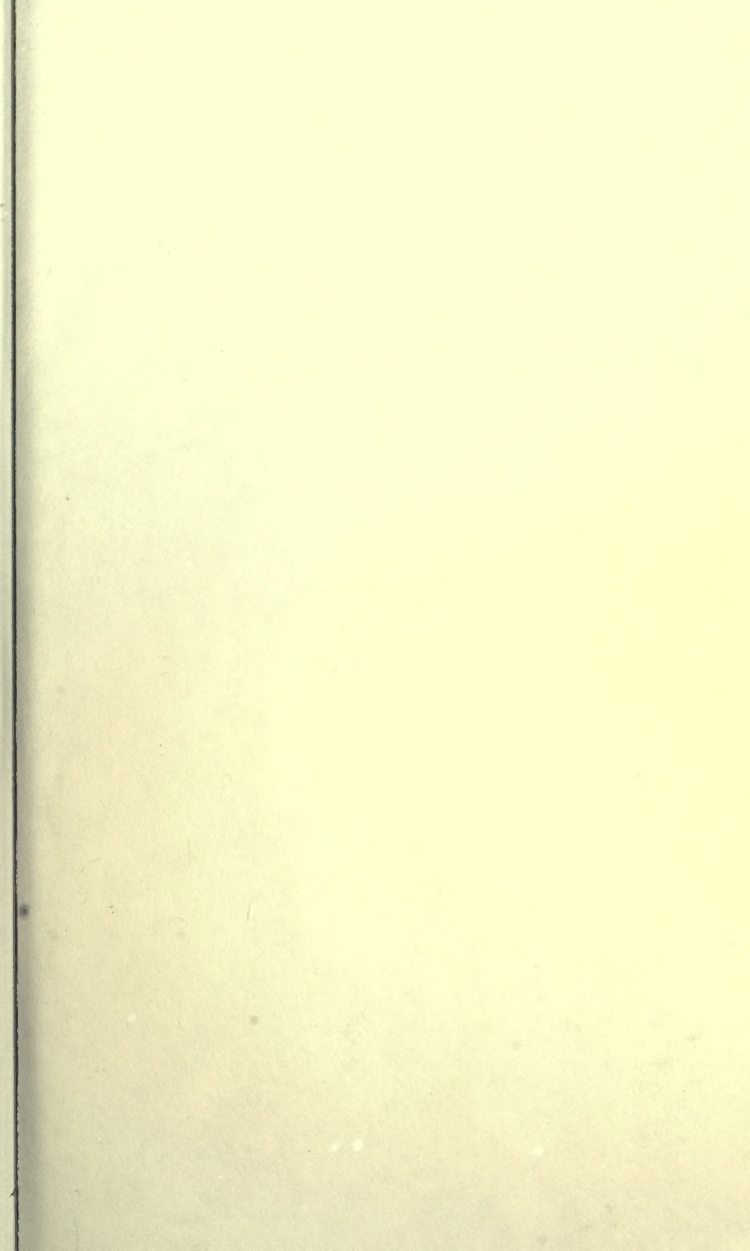
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# LAST POEMS





# LAST POEMS

By  
EDWARD THOMAS

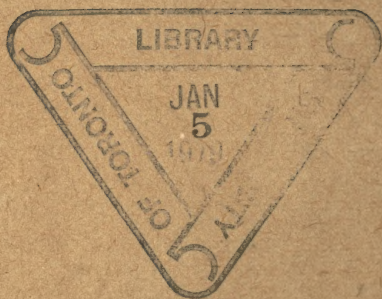
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## I NEVER SAW THAT LAND BEFORE

I NEVER saw that land before,  
And now can never see it again ;  
Yet, as if by acquaintance hoar  
Endeared, by gladness and by pain,  
Great was the affection that I bore

To the valley and the river small,  
The cattle, the grass, the bare ash trees,  
The chickens from the farmsteads, all  
Elm-hidden, and the tributaries  
Descending at equal interval ;

The blackthorns down along the brook  
With wounds yellow as crocuses  
Where yesterday the labourer's hook  
Had sliced them cleanly ; and the breeze  
That hinted all and nothing spoke.

I neither expected anything  
Nor yet remembered : but some goal  
I touched then ; and if I could sing  
What would not even whisper my soul  
As I went on my journeying,

I should use, as the trees and birds did,  
A language not to be betrayed ;  
And what was hid should still be hid  
Excepting from those like me made  
Who answer when such whispers bid.

## THE DARK FOREST

DARK is the forest and deep, and overhead  
Hang stars like seeds of light  
In vain, though not since they were sown was bred  
Anything more bright.

And evermore mighty multitudes ride  
About, nor enter in ;  
Of the other multitudes that dwell inside  
Never yet was one seen.

The forest foxglove is purple, the marguerite  
Outside is gold and white,  
Nor can those that pluck either blossom greet  
The others, day or night.



## CELANDINE

THINKING of her had saddened me at first,  
Until I saw the sun on the celandines lie  
Redoubled, and she stood up like a flame,  
A living thing, not what before I nursed,  
The shadow I was growing to love almost,  
The phantom, not the creature with bright eye  
That I had thought never to see, once lost.

She found the celandines of February  
Always before us all. Her nature and name  
Were like those flowers, and now immediately  
For a short swift eternity back she came,  
Beautiful, happy, simply as when she wore  
Her brightest bloom among the winter hues  
Of all the world ; and I was happy too,  
Seeing the blossoms and the maiden who  
Had seen them with me Februarys before,  
Bending to them as in and out she trod  
And laughed, with locks sweeping the mossy sod.

But this was a dream : the flowers were not true,  
Until I stooped to pluck from the grass there  
One of five petals and I smelt the juice  
Which made me sigh, remembering she was no more,  
Gone like a never perfectly recalled air.

## THE ASH GROVE

HALF of the grove stood dead, and those that yet  
lived made

Little more than the dead ones made of shade.

If they led to a house, long before they had seen  
its fall :

But they welcomed me ; I was glad without cause  
and delayed.

Scarce a hundred paces under the trees was the  
interval—

Paces each sweeter than sweetest miles—but  
nothing at all,

Not even the spirits of memory and fear with  
restless wing,

Could climb down in to molest me over the wall

That I passed through at either end without  
noticing.

And now an ash grove far from those hills can bring  
The same tranquillity in which I wander a ghost  
With a ghostly gladness, as if I heard a girl sing

The song of the Ash Grove soft as love uncrossed,  
And then in a crowd or in distance it were lost,  
But the moment unveiled something unwilling  
to die

And I had what most I desired, without search or  
desert or cost.

## OLD MAN

OLD Man, or Lad's-love,—in the name there's  
nothing

To one that knows not Lad's-love, or Old Man,  
The hoar-green feathery herb, almost a tree,  
Growing with rosemary and lavender.

Even to one that knows it well, the names  
Half decorate, half perplex, the thing it is :  
At least, what that is clings not to the names  
In spite of time. And yet I like the names.

The herb itself I like not, but for certain  
I love it, as some day the child will love it  
Who plucks a feather from the door-side bush  
Whenever she goes in or out of the house.  
Often she waits there, snipping the tips and  
shrivelling

The shreds at last on to the path, perhaps  
Thinking, perhaps of nothing, till she sniffs  
Her fingers and runs off. The bush is still  
But half as tall as she, though it is as old ;  
So well she clips it. Not a word she says ;  
And I can only wonder how much hereafter  
She will remember, with that bitter scent,  
Of garden rows, and ancient damson-trees  
Topping a hedge, a bent path to a door,  
A low thick bush beside the door, and me  
Forbidding her to pick.

As for myself,  
Where first I met the bitter scent is lost.

I, too, often shrivel the grey shreds,  
Sniff them and think and sniff again and try  
Once more to think what it is I am remembering,  
Always in vain. I cannot like the scent,  
Yet I would rather give up others more sweet,  
With no meaning, than this bitter one.

I have mislaid the key. I sniff the spray  
And think of nothing ; I see and I hear nothing ;  
Yet seem, too, to be listening, lying in wait  
For what I should, yet never can, remember :  
No garden appears, no path, no hoar-green bush  
Of Lad's-love, or Old Man, no child beside,  
Neither father nor mother, nor any playmate ;  
Only an avenue, dark, nameless, without end.



## THE THRUSH

WHEN Winter's ahead,  
What can you read in November  
That you read in April  
When Winter's dead ?

I hear the thrush, and I see  
Him alone at the end of the lane  
Near the bare poplar's tip,  
Singing continuously.

Is it more that you know  
Than that, even as in April,  
So in November,  
Winter is gone that must go ?

Or is all your lore  
Not to call November November,  
And April April,  
And Winter Winter—no more ?

But I know the months all,  
And their sweet names, April,  
May and June and October,  
As you call and call

I must remember  
What died into April  
And consider what will be born  
Of a fair November ;

And April I love for what  
It was born of, and November  
For what it will die in,  
What they are and what they are not,

While you love what is kind,  
What you can sing in  
And love and forget in  
All that's ahead and behind.

## I BUILT MYSELF A HOUSE OF GLASS.

I BUILT myself a house of glass :  
It took me years to make it :  
And I was proud. But now, alas,  
Would God someone would break it.  
But it looks too magnificent.  
No neighbour casts a stone  
From where he dwells, in tenement  
Or palace of glass, alone.

## FEBRUARY AFTERNOON

MEN heard this roar of parleying starlings, saw,  
A thousand years ago even as now,  
Black rooks with white gulls following the plough  
So that the first are last until a caw  
Commands that last are first again,—a law  
Which was of old when one, like me, dreamed  
how  
A thousand years might dust lie on his brow  
Yet thus would birds do between hedge and shaw.

Time swims before me, making as a day  
A thousand years, while the broad ploughland  
oak  
Roars mill-like and men strike and bear the  
stroke  
Of war as ever, audacious or resigned,  
And God still sits aloft in the array  
That we have wrought him, stone-deaf and  
stone-blind.

## DIGGING

WHAT matter makes my spade for tears or mirth,  
Letting down two clay pipes into the earth ?  
The one I smoked, the other a soldier  
Of Blenheim, Ramillies, and Malplaquet  
Perhaps. The dead man's immortality  
Lies represented lightly with my own,  
A yard or two nearer the living air  
Than bones of ancients who, amazed to see  
Almighty God erect the mastodon,  
Once laughed, or wept, in this same light of day.



## TWO HOUSES

BETWEEN a sunny bank and the sun  
The farmhouse smiles  
On the riverside plat :  
No other one  
So pleasant to look at .  
And remember, for many miles,  
So velvet-hushed and cool under the warm tiles.  
  
Not far from the road it lies, yet caught  
Far out of reach  
Of the road's dust  
And the dusty thought  
Of passers-by, though each  
Stops, and turns, and must  
Look down at it like a wasp at the muslined peach.  
  
But another house stood there long before :  
And as if above graves  
Still the turf heaves  
Above its stones :  
Dark hangs the sycamore,  
Shadowing kennel and bones  
And the black dog that shakes his chain and moans.  
  
And when he barks, over the river  
Flashing fast,  
Dark echoes reply,  
And the hollow past  
Half yields the dead that never  
More than half hidden lie :  
And out they creep and back again for ever.

## THE MILL-WATER

ONLY the sound remains  
Of the old mill ;  
Gone is the wheel ;  
On the prone roof and walls the nettle reigns.

Water that toils no more  
Dangles white locks  
And, falling, mocks  
The music of the mill-wheel's busy roar.

Pretty to see, by day  
Its sound is naught  
Compared with thought  
And talk and noise of labour and of play.

Night makes the difference.  
In calm moonlight,  
Gloom infinite,  
The sound comes surging in upon the sense :

Solitude, company,—  
When it is night,—  
Grief or delight  
By it must haunted or concluded be.

Often the silentness  
Has but this one  
Companion ;  
Wherever one creeps in the other is :

Sometimes a thought is drowned  
By it, sometimes  
Out of it climbs ;  
All thoughts begin or end upon this sound,  
  
Only the idle foam  
Of water falling  
Changelessly calling,  
Where once men had a work-place and a home.

## A DREAM

OVER known fields with an old friend in dream  
I walked, but came sudden to a strange stream.  
Its dark waters were bursting out most bright  
From a great mountain's heart into the light.  
They ran a short course under the sun, then back  
Into a pit they plunged, once more as black  
As at their birth ; and I stood thinking there  
How white, had the day shone on them, they were,  
Heaving and coiling. So by the roar and hiss  
And by the mighty motion of the abyss  
I was bemused, that I forgot my friend  
And neither saw nor sought him till the end,  
When I awoke from waters unto men  
Saying : " I shall be here some day again."

## SEDGE-WARBLERS

THIS beauty made me dream there was a time  
Long past and irrecoverable, a clime  
Where any brook so radiant racing clear  
Through buttercup and kingcup bright as brass  
But gentle, nourishing the meadow grass  
That leans and scurries in the wind, would bear  
Another beauty, divine and feminine,  
Child to the sun, a nymph whose soul unstained  
Could love all day, and never hate or tire,  
A lover of mortal or immortal kin.

And yet, rid of this dream, ere I had drained  
Its poison, quieted was my desire  
So that I only looked into the water,  
Clearer than any goddess or man's daughter,  
And hearkened while it combed the dark green hair  
And shook the millions of the blossoms white  
Of water-crowfoot, and curdled to one sheet  
The flowers fallen from the chestnuts in the park  
Far off. And sedge-warblers, clinging so light  
To willow twigs, sang longer than the lark,  
Quick, shrill, or grating, a song to match the heat  
Of the strong sun, nor less the water's cool,  
Gushing through narrows, swirling in the pool.  
Their song that lacks all words, all melody,  
All sweetness almost, was dearer then to me  
Than sweetest voice that sings in tune sweet words.  
This was the best of May—the small brown birds  
Wisely reiterating endlessly  
What no man learnt yet, in or out of school.



## UNDER THE WOODS

WHEN these old woods were young  
The thrushes' ancestors  
As sweetly sung  
In the old years.

There was no garden here,  
Apples nor mistletoe ;  
No children dear  
Ran to and fro.

New then was this thatched cot,  
But the keeper was old,  
And he had not  
Much lead or gold.

Most silent beech and yew :  
As he went round about  
The woods to view  
Seldom he shot.

But now that he is gone  
Out of most memories,  
Still lingers on,  
A stoat of his,

But one, shrivelled and green,  
And with no scent at all,  
And barely seen  
On this shed wall.

## WHAT WILL THEY DO ?

What will they do when I am gone ? It is plain  
That they will do without me as the rain  
Can do without the flowers and the grass  
That profit by it and must perish without.  
I have but seen them in the loud street pass ;  
And I was naught to them. I turned about  
To see them disappearing carelessly.  
But what if I in them as they in me  
Nourished what has great value and no price ?  
Almost I thought that rain thirsts for a draught  
Which only in the blossom's chalice lies,  
Until that one turned back and lightly laughed.

## TO-NIGHT

HARRY, you know at night  
The larks in Castle Alley  
Sing from the attic's height  
As if the electric light  
Were the true sun above a summer valley :  
Whistle, don't knock, to-night.

I shall come early, Kate :  
And we in Castle Alley  
Will sit close out of sight  
Alone, and ask no light  
Of lamp or sun above a summer valley :  
To-night I can stay late.

## A CAT

She had a name among the children ;  
But no one loved though someone owned  
Her, locked her out of doors at bedtime  
And had her kittens duly drowned.

In Spring, nevertheless, this cat  
Ate blackbirds, thrushes, nightingales,  
And birds of bright voice and plume and flight,  
As well as scraps from neighbours' pails.

I loathed and hated her for this ;  
One speckle on a thrush's breast  
Was worth a million such ; and yet  
She lived long, till God gave her rest.

## THE UNKNOWN

SHE is most fair,  
And when they see her pass  
The poets' ladies  
Look no more in the glass  
But after her.

• On a bleak moor  
Running under the moon  
She lures a poet,  
Once proud or happy, soon  
Far from his door.

Beside a train,  
Because they saw her go,  
Or failed to see her,  
Travellers and watchers know  
Another pain.

The simple lack  
Of her is more to me  
Than others' presence,  
Whether life splendid be  
Or utter black.

I have not seen,  
I have no news of her ;  
I can tell only  
She is not here, but there  
She might have been.



She is to be kissed  
Only perhaps by me ;  
She may be seeking  
Me and no other ; she  
May not exist.

## SONG

At poet's tears,  
Sweeter than any smiles but hers,  
She laughs ; I sigh ;  
And yet I could not live if she should die.

And when in June  
Once more the cuckoo spoils his tune,  
She laughs at sighs ;  
And yet she says she loves me till she dies.

## SHE DOTES

SHE dotes on what the wild birds say  
Or hint or mock at, night and day,—  
Thrush, blackbird, all that sing in May,  
And songless plover,  
Hawk, heron, owl, and woodpecker.  
They never say a word to her  
About her lover.

She laughs at them for childishness,  
She cries at them for carelessness  
Who see her going loverless  
Yet sing and chatter  
Just as when he was not a ghost,  
Nor ever ask her what she has lost  
Or what is the matter.

Yet she has fancied blackbirds hide  
A secret, and that thrushes chide  
Because she thinks death can divide  
Her from her lover ;  
And she has slept, trying to translate  
The word the cuckoo cries to his mate  
Over and over.

## FOR THESE

AN acre of land between the shore and the hills,  
Upon a ledge that shows my kingdoms three,  
The lovely visible earth and sky and sea,  
Where what the curlew needs not, the farmer tills :

A house that shall love me as I love it,  
Well-hedged, and honoured by a few ash-trees  
That linnets, greenfinches, and goldfinches  
Shall often visit and make love in and flit :

A garden I need never go beyond,  
Broken but neat, whose sunflowers every one  
Are fit to be the sign of the Rising Sun :  
A spring, a brook's bend, or at least a pond :

For these I ask not, but, neither too late  
Nor yet too early, for what men call content,  
And also that something may be sent  
To be contented with, I ask of fate.

## MARCH THE THIRD\*

HERE again (she said) is March the third  
And twelve hours singing for the bird  
'Twixt dawn and dusk, from half past six  
To half past six, never unheard.

'Tis Sunday, and the church-bells end  
When the birds do. I think they blend  
Now better than they will when passed  
Is this unnamed, unmarked godsend.

Or do all mark, and none dares say,  
How it may shift and long delay,  
Somewhere before the first of Spring,  
But never fails, this singing day ?

And when it falls on Sunday, bells  
Are a wild natural voice that dwells  
On hillsides ; but the birds' songs have  
The holiness gone from the bells,

This day unpromised is more dear  
Than all the named days of the year  
When seasonable sweets come in,  
Because we know how lucky we are.

\* The author's birthday.



## THE NEW HOUSE

Now first, as I shut the door,  
I was alone  
In the new house ; and the wind  
Began to moan.

Old at once was the house,  
And I was old ;  
My ears were teased with the dread  
Of what was foretold,

Nights of storm, days of mist, without end ;  
Sad days when the sun  
Shone in vain : old griefs and griefs  
Not yet begun.

All was foretold me ; naught  
Could I foresee ;  
But I learned how the wind would sound  
After these things should be.

## MARCH

Now I know that Spring will come again,  
Perhaps to-morrow : however late I've patience  
After this night following on such a day.

While still my temples ached from the cold burning  
Of hail and wind, and still the primroses  
Torn by the hail were covered up in it,  
The sun filled earth and heaven with a great light  
And a 'tenderness, almost warmth, where the hail  
dripped,

As if the mighty sun wept tears of joy.  
But 'twas too late for warmth. The sunset piled  
Mountains on mountains of snow and ice in the  
west :

Somewhere among their folds the wind was lost,  
And yet 'twas cold, and though I knew that  
Spring

Would come again, I knew it had not come,  
That it was lost too in those mountains chill.

What did the thrushes know ? Rain, snow, sleet,  
hail,

Had kept them quiet as the primroses.

They had but an hour to sing. On boughs they  
sang,

On gates, on ground ; they sang while they  
changed perches

And while they fought, if they remembered to  
fight :

So earnest were they to pack into that hour  
Their unwilling hoard of song before the moon  
Grew brighter than the clouds. Then 'twas  
no time

For singing merely. So they could keep off silence  
And night, they cared not what they sang or  
screamed ;

Whether 'twas hoarse or sweet or fierce or soft ;  
And to me all was sweet : they could do no wrong.  
Something they knew—I also, while they sang  
And after. Not till night had half its stars  
And never a cloud, was I aware of silence  
Stained with all that hour's songs, a silence  
Saying that Spring returns, perhaps to-morrow.

## THE CUCKOO

THAT'S the cuckoo, you say. I cannot hear it.  
When last I heard it I cannot recall ; but I know  
Too well the year when first I failed to hear it—  
It was drowned by my man groaning out to his  
sheep “ Ho ! Ho ! ”

Ten times with an angry voice he shouted  
“ Ho ! Ho ! ” but not in anger, for that was his  
way.

He died that Summer, and that is how I remember  
The cuckoo calling, the children listening, and me  
saying, “ Nay.”

And now, as you said, “ There it is,” I was hearing  
Not the cuckoo at all, but my man's “ Ho ! Ho ! ”  
instead.

And I think that even if I could lose my deafness  
The cuckoo's note would be drowned by the voice  
of my dead.

## OVER THE HILLS

OFTEN and often it came back again  
To mind, the day I passed the horizon ridge  
To a new country, the path I had to find  
By half-gaps that were stiles once in the hedge,  
The pack of scarlet clouds running across  
The harvest evening that seemed endless then  
And after, and the inn where all were kind,  
All were strangers. I did not know my loss  
Till one day twelve months later suddenly  
I leaned upon my spade and saw it all,  
Though far beyond the sky-line. It became  
Almost a habit through the year for me  
To lean and see it and think to do the same  
Again for two days and a night. Recall  
Was vain : no more could the restless brook  
Ever turn back and climb the waterfall  
To the lake that rests and stirs not in its nook,  
As in the hollow of the collar-bone  
Under the mountain's head of rush and stone.



## HOME

OFTEN I had gone this way before :  
But now it seemed I never could be  
And never had been anywhere else ;  
'Twas home ; one nationality  
We had, I and the birds that sang,  
One memory.

They welcomed me. I had come back  
That eve somehow from somewhere far :  
The April mist, the chill, the calm,  
Meant the same thing familiar  
And pleasant to us, and strange too,  
Yet with no bar.

The thrush on the oaktop in the lane  
Sang his last song, or last but one ;  
And as he ended, on the elm  
Another had but just begun  
His last ; they knew no more than I  
The day was done.

Then past his dark white cottage front  
A labourer went along, his tread  
Slow, half with weariness, half with ease ;  
And, through the silence, from his shed  
The sound of sawing rounded all  
That silence said.

## THE HOLLOW WOOD

Out in the sun the goldfinch flits  
Along the thistle-tops, flits and twits  
Above the hollow wood  
Where birds swim like fish—  
Fish that laugh and shriek—  
To and fro, far below  
In the pale hollow wood.

Lichen, ivy, and moss  
Keep evergreen the trees  
That stand half-flayed and dying,  
And the dead trees on their knees  
In dog's-mercury and moss :  
And the bright twit of the goldfinch drops  
Down there as he flits on thistle-tops.

## WIND AND MIST

THEY met inside the gateway that gives the view,  
A hollow land as vast as heaven. "It is  
A pleasant day, sir." "A very pleasant day."  
"And what a view here. If you like angled fields  
Of grass and grain bounded by oak and thorn,  
Here is a league. Had we with Germany  
To play upon this board it could not be  
More dear than April has made it with a smile.  
The fields beyond that league close in together  
And merge, even as our days into the past,  
Into one wood that has a shining pane  
Of water. Then the hills of the horizon—  
That is how I should make hills had I to show  
One who would never see them what hills were  
like."

"Yes. Sixty miles of South Downs at one glance.  
Sometimes a man feels proud at them, as if  
He had just created them with one mighty  
thought."

"That house, though modern, could not be better  
planned

For its position. I never liked a new  
House better. Could you tell me who lives in  
it?"

"No one." "Ah—and I was peopling all  
Those windows on the south with happy eyes,  
The terrace under them with happy feet;  
Girls—" "Sir, I know. I know. I have seen  
that house

Through mist look lovely as a castle in Spain,  
And airier. I have thought : ‘ ‘Twere happy there  
To live.’ And I have laughed at that  
Because I lived there then.” “Extraordinary.”

“Yes, with my furniture and family  
Still in it, I, knowing every nook of it  
And loving none, and in fact hating it.”

“Dear me! How could that be? But pardon  
me.”

“No offence. Doubtless the house was not to  
blame,

But the eye watching from those windows saw,  
Many a day, day after day, mist—mist  
Like chaos surging back—and felt itself  
Alone in all the world, marooned alone.

We lived in clouds, on a cliff’s edge almost  
(You see), and if clouds went, the visible earth  
Lay too far off beneath and like a cloud.

I did not know it was the earth I loved  
Until I tried to live there in the clouds  
And the earth turned to cloud.” “You had a  
garden

Of flint and clay, too.” “True; that was real  
enough.

The flint was the one crop that never failed.  
The clay first broke my heart, and then my back;  
And the back heals not. There were other things  
Real, too. In that room at the gable a child  
Was born while the wind chilled a summer dawn:  
Never looked greyer mind on a greyer one  
Than when the child’s cry broke above the groans.”

"I hope they were both spared." "They were.

Oh yes.

But flint and clay and childbirth were too real  
For this cloud-castle. I had forgot the wind.

Pray do not let me get on to the wind.

You would not understand about the wind.

It is my subject, and compared with me

Those who have always lived on the firm ground

Are quite unreal in this matter of the wind.

There were whole days and nights when the wind  
and I

Between us shared the world, and the wind ruled  
And I obeyed it and forgot the mist.

My past and the past of the world were in the  
wind.

Now you may say that though you understand

And feel for me, and so on, you yourself

Would find it different. You are all like that

If once you stand here free from wind and mist :

I might as well be talking to wind and mist.

You would believe the house-agent's young man

Who gives no heed to anything I say.

Good morning. But one word. I want to admit

That I would try the house once more, if I  
could ;

As I should like to try being young again."



## THE UNKNOWN BIRD

THREE lovely notes he whistled, too soft to be  
heard

If others sang ; but others never sang  
In the great beech-wood all that May and June.  
No one saw him : I alone could hear him  
Though many listened. Was it but four years  
Ago ? or five ? He never came again.

Oftenest when I heard him I was alone,  
Nor could I ever make another hear.  
La-la-la ! he called, seeming far-off—  
As if a cock crowed past the edge of the world,  
As if the bird or I were in a dream.  
Yet that he travelled through the trees and some-  
times  
Neared me, was plain, though somehow distant  
still  
He sounded. All the proof is—I told men  
What I had heard.

I never knew a voice,  
Man, beast, or bird, better than this. I told  
The naturalists ; but neither had they heard  
Anything like the notes that did so haunt me,  
I had them clear by heart and have them still.  
Four years, or five, have made no difference.  
Then

As now that La-la-la ! was bodiless sweet :  
Sad more than joyful it was, if I must say



That it was one or other, but if sad  
'Twas sad only with joy too, too far off  
For me to taste it. But I cannot tell  
If truly never anything but fair  
The days were when he sang, as now they seem.  
This surely I know, that I who listened then,  
Happy sometimes, sometimes suffering  
A heavy body and a heavy heart,  
Now straightway, if I think of it, become  
Light as that bird wandering beyond my shore.

### THE LOFTY SKY

TO-DAY I want the sky,  
The tops of the high hills,  
Above the last man's house,  
His hedges, and his cows,  
Where, if I will, I look  
Down even on sheep and rook,  
And of all things that move  
See buzzards only above :—  
Past all trees, past furze  
And thorn, where nought deters  
The desire of the eye  
For sky, nothing but sky.  
I sicken of the woods  
And all the multitudes  
Of hedge-trees. They are no more

Than weeds upon this floor  
Of the river of air  
Leagues deep, leagues wide, where  
I am like a fish that lives  
In weeds and mud and gives  
What's above him no thought.  
I might be a tench for aught  
That I can do to-day  
Down on the wealden clay.  
Even the tench has days  
When he floats up and plays  
Among the lily leaves  
And sees the sky, or grieves  
Not if he nothing sees :  
While I, I know that trees  
Under that lofty sky  
Are weeds, fields mud, and I  
Would arise and go far  
To where the lilies are.

## AFTER RAIN

THE rain of a night and a day and a night  
Stops at the light  
Of this pale choked day. The peering sun  
Sees what has been done.  
The road under the trees has a border new  
Of purple hue  
Inside the border of bright thin grass :  
For all that has  
Been left by November of leaves is torn  
From hazel and thorn  
And the greater trees. Throughout the copse  
No dead leaf drops  
On grey grass, green moss, burnt-orange fern,  
At the wind's return :  
The leaflets out of the ash-tree shed  
Are thinly spread  
In the road, like little black fish, inlaid,  
As if they played.  
What hangs from the myriad branches down there  
So hard and bare  
Is twelve yellow apples lovely to see  
On one crab-tree.  
And on each twig of every tree in the dell  
Uncountable  
Crystals both dark and bright of the rain  
That begins again.

## DIGGING

TO-DAY I think

Only with scents,—scents dead leaves yield,  
And bracken, and wild carrot's seed,  
And the square mustard field ;

Odours that rise

When the spade wounds the root of tree,  
Rose, currant, raspberry, or goutweed,  
Rhubarb or celery ;

The smoke's smell, too,

Flowing from where a bonfire burns  
The dead, the waste, the dangerous,  
And all to sweetness turns.

It is enough

To smell, to crumble the dark earth,  
While the robin sings over again  
Sad songs of Autumn mirth.

## BUT THESE THINGS ALSO

BUT these things also are Spring's—  
On banks by the roadside the grass  
Long-dead that is greyer now  
Than all the Winter it was ;

The shell of a little snail bleached  
In the grass ; chip of flint, and mite  
Of chalk ; and the small birds' dung  
In splashes of purest white :

All the white things a man mistakes  
For earliest violets  
Who seeks through Winter's ruins  
Something to pay Winter's debts,

While the North blows, and starling flocks  
By chattering on and on  
Keep their spirits up in the mist,  
And Spring's here, Winter's not gone.

## APRIL

THE sweetest thing, I thought  
At one time, between earth and heaven  
Was the first smile  
When mist has been forgiven  
And the sun has stolen out,  
Peered, and resolved to shine at seven  
On dabbled lengthening grasses,  
Thick primroses and early leaves uneven,  
When earth's breath, warm and humid, far sur  
    passes  
The richest oven's, and loudly rings "cuckoo"  
And sharply the nightingale's "tsoo, tsoo, tsoo,  
    tsoo":  
To say "God bless it" was all that I could do.

But now I know one sweeter  
By far since the day Emily  
Turned weeping back  
To me, still happy me,  
To ask forgiveness,—  
Yet smiled with half a certainty  
To be forgiven,—for what  
She had never done; I knew not what it might be,  
Nor could she tell me, having now forgot,  
By rapture carried with me past all care  
As to an<sup>1</sup>isle in April lovelier  
Than April's self. "God bless you" I said to her.



## THE BARN

THEY should never have built a barn there, at all—  
Drip, drip, drip !—under that elm tree,  
Though then it was young. Now it is old  
But good, not like the barn and me.

To-morrow they cut it down. They will leave  
The barn, as I shall be left, maybe.  
What holds it up ? 'Twould not pay to pull down.  
Well, this place has no other antiquity.

No abbey or castle looks so old  
As this that Job Knight built in '54,  
Built to keep corn for rats and men.  
Now there's fowls in the roof, pigs on the floor.

What thatch survives is dung for the grass,  
The best grass on the farm. A pity the roof  
Will not bear a mower to mow it. But  
Only fowls have foothold enough.

Starlings used to sit there with bubbling throats  
Making a spiky beard as they chattered  
And whistled and kissed, with heads in air,  
Till they thought of something else that mattered.

But now they cannot find a place,  
Among all those holes, for a nest any more.  
It's the turn of lesser things, I suppose.  
Once I fancied 'twas starlings they built it for.

## THE BARN AND THE DOWN

It stood in the sunset sky  
Like the straight-backed down,  
Many a time—the barn  
At the edge of the town,

So huge and dark that it seemed  
It was the hill  
Till the gable's precipice proved  
It impossible.

Then the great down in the west  
Grew into sight,  
A barn stored full to the ridge  
With black of night ;

And the barn fell to a barn  
Or even less  
Before critical eyes and its own  
Late mightiness.

But far down and near barn and I  
Since then have smiled,  
Having seen my new cautiousness  
By itself beguiled

To disdain what seemed the barn  
Till a few steps changed  
It past all doubt to the down ;  
So the barn was avenged.

## THE CHILD ON THE CLIFFS

MOTHER, the root of this little yellow flower  
Among the stones has the taste of quinine.  
Things are strange to-day on the cliff. The sun  
shines so bright,  
And the grasshopper works at his sewing-machine  
So hard. Here's one on my hand, mother, look ;  
I lie so still. There's one on your book.

But I have something to tell more strange. So  
leave

Your book to the grasshopper, mother dear,—  
Like a green knight in a dazzling market-place,—  
And listen now. Can you hear what I hear  
Far out ? Now and then the foam there curls  
And stretches a white arm out like a girl's.

Fishes and gulls ring no bells. There cannot be  
A chapel or church between here and Devon,  
With fishes or gulls ringing its bell,—hark.—  
Somewhere under the sea or up in heaven.  
“ It's the bell, my son, out in the bay  
On the buoy. It does sound sweet to-day.”

Sweeter I never heard, mother, no, not in all Wales.  
I should like to be lying under that foam,  
Dead, but able to hear the sound of the bell,  
And certain that you would often come  
And rest, listening happily.  
I should be happy if that could be.

## GOOD-NIGHT.

THE skylarks are far behind that sang over the  
down ;

I can hear no more those suburb nightingales ;  
Thrushes and blackbirds sing in the gardens of the  
town

In vain : the noise of man, beast, and machine  
prevails.

But the call of children in the unfamiliar streets  
That echo with a familiar twilight echoing,  
Sweet as the voice of nightingale or lark, completes  
A magic of strange welcome, so that I seem a king

Among man, beast, machine, bird, child, and the  
ghost

That in the echo lives and with the echo dies.

The friendless town is friendly ; homeless, I am  
not lost ;

Though I know none of these doors, and meet but  
strangers' eyes.

Never again, perhaps, after to-morrow, shall  
I see these homely streets, these church windows  
alight,

Not a man or woman or child among them all :  
But it is All Friends' Night, a traveller's good  
night.

## THE WASP TRAP

THIS moonlight makes  
The lovely lovelier  
Than ever before lakes  
And meadows were.

And yet they are not,  
Though this their hour is, more  
Lovely than things that were not  
Lovely before.

Nothing on earth,  
And in the heavens no star,  
For pure brightness is worth  
More than that jar,

For wasps meant, now  
A star—long may it swing  
From the dead apple-bough,  
So glistening.

## JULY

NAUGHT moves but clouds, and in the glassy lake  
Their doubles and the shadow of my boat.  
The boat itself stirs only when I break  
This drowse of heat and solitude afloat  
To prove if what I see be bird or mote,  
Or learn if yet the shore woods be awake.

Long hours since dawn grew,—spread,—and passed  
    on high  
And deep below,—I have watched the cool reeds  
    hung  
Over images more cool in imaged sky :  
Nothing there was worth thinking of so long ;  
All that the ring-doves say, far leaves among,  
Brims my mind with content thus still to lie.

## A TALE

THERE once the walls  
Of the ruined cottage stood.  
The periwinkle crawls  
With flowers in its hair into the wood.

In flowerless hours  
Never will the bank fail,  
With everlasting flowers  
On fragments of blue plates, to tell the tale



## PARTING

THE Past is a strange land, most strange.  
Wind blows not there, nor does rain fall :  
If they do, they cannot hurt at all.  
Men of all kinds as equals range

The soundless fields and streets of it.  
Pleasure and pain there have no sting,  
The perished self not suffering  
That lacks all blood and nerve and wit,

And is in shadow-land a shade.  
Remembered joy and misery  
Bring joy to the joyous equally ;  
Both sadden the sad. So memory made

Parting to-day a double pain :  
First because it was parting ; next  
Because the ill it ended vexed  
And mocked me from the Past again,

Not as what had been remedied  
Had I gone on,—not that, oh no !  
But as itself no longer woe ;  
Sighs, angry word and look and deed

Being faded : rather a kind of bliss,  
For there spiritualized it lay  
In the perpetual yesterday  
That naught can stir or stain like this.

## LOVERS

THE two men in the road were taken aback.

The lovers came out shading their eyes from the  
sun,

And never was white so white, or black so black,  
As her cheeks and hair. "There are more things  
than one

A man might turn into a wood for, Jack,"

Said George ; Jack whispered : "He has not got  
a gun.

It's a bit too much of a good thing, I say.

They are going the other road, look. And see her  
run."—

She ran.—"What a thing it is, this picking may."

## THAT GIRL'S CLEAR EYES

THAT girl's clear eyes utterly concealed all  
Except that there was something to reveal.  
And what did mine say in the interval ?  
No more : no less. They are but as a seal  
Not to be broken till after I am dead ;  
And then vainly. Every one of us  
This morning at our tasks left nothing said,  
In spite of many words. We were sealed thus,  
Like tombs. Nor until now could I admit  
That all I cared for was the pleasure and pain  
I tasted in the stony square sunlit,  
Or the dark cloisters, or shade of airy plane,  
While music blazed and children, line after line,  
Marched past, hiding the "SEVENTEEN THIRTY-  
NINE."

## THE CHILD IN THE ORCHARD

“ HE rolls in the orchard : he is stained with moss  
And with earth, the solitary old white horse.  
Where is his father and where is his mother  
Among all the brown horses ? Has he a brother ?  
I know the swallow, the hawk, and the hern ;  
But there are two million things for me to learn.

“ Who was the lady that rode the white horse  
With rings and bells to Banbury Cross ?  
Was there no other lady in England beside  
That a nursery rhyme could take for a ride ?  
The swift, the swallow, the hawk, and the hern.  
There are two million things for me to learn.

‘ Was there a man once who straddled across  
The back of the Westbury White Horse  
Over there on Salisbury Plain’s green wall ?  
Was he bound for Westbury, or had he a fall ?  
The swift, the swallow, the hawk, and the hern.  
There are two million things for me to learn.

“ Out of all the white horses I know three,  
At the age of six ; and it seems to me  
There is so much to learn, for men,  
That I dare not go to bed again.  
The swift, the swallow, the hawk, and the hern.  
There are millions of things for me to learn.”

## THE SOURCE

ALL day the air triumphs with its two voices  
Of wind and rain  
As loud as if in anger it rejoices,  
Drowning the sound of earth  
That gulps and gulps in choked endeavour vain  
To swallow the rain.

Half the night, too, only the wild air speaks  
With wind and rain,  
Till forth the dumb source of the river breaks  
And drowns the rain and wind,  
Bellows like a giant bathing in mighty mirth  
The triumph of earth.

## THE MOUNTAIN CHAPEL

CHAPEL and gravestones, old and few,  
Are shrouded by a mountain fold  
From sound and view

Of life. The loss of the brook's voice  
Falls like a shadow. All they hear is  
The eternal noise  
Of wind whistling in grass more shrill  
Than aught as human as a sword,  
And saying still :

“ 'Tis but a moment since man's birth  
And in another moment more

Man lies in earth

For ever ; but I am the same

Now, and shall be, even as I was

Before he came ;

Till there is nothing I shall be.”

Yet there the sun shines after noon

So cheerfully

The place almost seems peopled, nor

Lacks cottage chimney, cottage hearth :

It is not more

In size than is a cottage, less

Than any other empty home

In homeliness.

It has a garden of wild flowers

And finest grass and gravestones warm

In sunshine hours

The year through. Men behind the glass

Stand once a week, singing, and drown



The whistling grass  
Their ponies munch. And yet somewhere,  
Near or far off, there's a man could  
Be happy here,  
Or one of the gods perhaps, were they  
Not of inhuman stature dire,  
As poets say  
Who have not seen them clearly ; if  
At sound of any wind of the world  
In grass-blades stiff  
They would not startle and shudder cold  
Under the sun. When gods were young  
This wind was old.

## FIRST KNOWN WHEN LOST

I NEVER had noticed it until  
'Twas gone,—the narrow copse  
Where now the woodman lops  
The last of the willows with his bill.

It was not more than a hedge overgrown.  
One meadow's breadth away  
I passed it day by day.  
Now the soil was bare as a bone,

And black betwixt two meadows green,  
Though fresh-cut faggot ends  
Of hazel made some amends  
With a gleam as if flowers they had been.

Strange it could have hidden so near !  
And now I see as I look  
That the small winding brook,  
A tributary's tributary, rises there.

## THE WORD

THERE are so many things I have forgot,  
That once were much to me, or that were not,  
All lost, as is a childless woman's child  
And its child's children, in the undefiled  
Abyss of what can never be again.  
I have forgot, too, names of the mighty men  
That fought and lost or won in the old wars,  
Of kings and fiends and gods, and most of the stars.  
Some things I have forgot that I forget.  
But lesser things there are, remembered yet,  
Than all the others. One name that I have not—  
Though 'tis an empty thingless name—forgot  
Never can die because Spring after Spring  
Some thrushes learn to say it as they sing.  
There is always one at midday saying it clear  
And tart—the name, only the name I hear.  
While perhaps I am thinking of the elder scent  
That is like food, or while I am content  
With the wild rose scent that is like memory,  
This name suddenly is cried out to me  
From somewhere in the bushes by a bird  
Over and over again, a pure thrush word.

## THESE THINGS THAT POETS SAID

THESE things that poets said  
Of love seemed true to me  
When I loved and I fed  
On love and poetry equally.

But now I wish I knew  
If theirs were love indeed,  
Or if mine were the true  
And theirs some other lovely wee i :

For certainly not thus,  
Then or thereafter, I  
Loved ever. Between us  
Decide, good Love, before I die.

Only, that once I loved  
By this one argument  
Is very plainly proved :  
I, loving not, am different.

## HOME

Not the end : but there's nothing more.  
Sweet Summer and Winter rude  
I have loved, and friendship and love,  
The crowd and solitude :

But I know them : I weary not ;  
But all that they mean I know.  
I would go back again home  
Now. Yet how should I go ?

This is my grief. That land,  
My home, I have never seen ;  
No traveller tells of it,  
However far he has been.

And could I discover it,  
I fear my happiness there,  
Or my pain, might be dreams of return  
Here, to these things that were.

Remembering ills, though slight  
Yet irremediable,  
Brings a worse, an impurer pang  
Than remembering what was well.

No : I cannot go back,  
And would not if I could.  
Until blindness come, I must wait.  
And blink at what is not good.

## ASPENS

ALL day and night, save winter, every weather,  
Above the inn, the smithy, and the shop,  
The aspens at the cross-roads talk together  
Of rain, until their last leaves fall from the top.

Out of the blacksmith's cavern comes the ringing  
Of hammer, shoe, and anvil ; out of the inn  
The clink, the hum, the roar, the random singing—  
The sounds that for these fifty years have been.

The whisper of the aspens is not drowned,  
And over lightless pane and footless road,  
Empty as sky, with every other sound  
Not ceasing, calls their ghosts from their abode,

A silent smithy, a silent inn, nor fails  
In the bare moonlight or the thick-furred gloom,  
In tempest or the night of nightingales,  
To turn the cross-roads to a ghostly room.

And it would be the same were no house near.  
Over all sorts of weather, men, and times,  
Aspens must shake their leaves and men may hear  
But need not listen, more than to my rhymes.

Whatever wind blows, while they and I have leaves  
We cannot other than an aspen be  
That ceaselessly, unreasonably grieves,  
Or so men think who like a different tree.



## AN OLD SONG

I WAS not apprenticed nor ever dwelt in famous  
Lincolnshire ;

I've served one master ill and well much more than  
seven year ;

And never took up to poaching as you shall quickly  
find ;

But 'tis my delight of a shiny night in the season  
of the year.

I roamed where nobody had a right but keepers and  
squires, and there

I sought for nests, wild flowers, oak sticks, and  
moles, both far and near.

And had to run from farmers, and learnt the  
Lincolnshire song :

“ Oh, 'tis my delight of a shiny night in the  
season of the year.”

I took those walks years after, talking with friend  
or dear,

Or solitary musing ; but when the moon shone clear

I had no joy or sorrow that could not be expressed

By “ 'Tis my delight of a shiny night in the  
season of the year.”

Since then I've thrown away a chance to fight a  
gamekeeper ;

And I less often trespass, and what I see or hear

Is mostly from the road or path by day : yet still

I sing :

“ Oh, 'tis my delight of a shiny night in the  
season of the year.”

For if I am contented, at home or anywhere,  
Or if I sigh for I know not what, or my heart  
    beats with some fear,  
It is a strange kind of delight to sing or whistle just :  
    “ Oh, 'tis my delight of a shiny night in the  
        season of the year.”

And with this melody on my lips and no one by to  
    care,  
Indoors, or out on shiny nights or dark in open air,  
I am for a moment made a man that sings out of  
    his heart :  
    “ Oh, 'tis my delight of a shiny night in the  
        season of the year.”

## THERE WAS A TIME

THERE was a time when this poor frame was whole  
And I had youth and never another care,  
Or none that should have troubled a strong soul.  
Yet, except sometimes in a frosty air  
When my heels hammered out a melody  
From pavements of a city left behind,  
I never would acknowledge my own glee  
Because it was less mighty than my mind  
Had dreamed of. Since I could not boast of strength  
Great as I wished, weakness was all my boast.  
I sought yet hated pity till at length  
I earned it. Oh, too heavy was the cost.  
But now that there is something I could use  
My youth and strength for, I deny the age,  
The care and weakness that I know—refuse  
To admit I am unworthy of the wage  
Paid to a man who gives up eyes and breath  
For what can neither ask nor heed his death.

## AMBITION

UNLESS it was that day I never knew  
Ambition. After a night of frost, before  
The March sun brightened and the South-west blew,  
Jackdaws began to shout and float and soar  
Already, and one was racing straight and high  
Alone, shouting like a black warrior  
Challenges and menaces to the wide sky.  
With loud long laughter then a woodpecker  
Ridiculed the sadness of the owl's last cry.  
And through the valley where all the folk astir  
Made only plumes of pearly smoke to tower  
Over dark trees and white meadows happier  
Than was Elysium in that happy hour,  
A train that roared along raised after it  
And carried with it a motionless white bower  
Of purest cloud, from end to end close-knit,  
So fair it touched the roar with silence. Time  
Was powerless while that lasted. I could sit  
And think I had made the loveliness of prime,  
Breathed its life into it and were its lord,  
And no mind lived save this 'twixt clouds and rime.  
Omnipotent I was, nor even deplored  
That I did nothing. But the end fell like a bell :  
The bower was scattered ; far off the train roared.  
But if this was ambition I cannot tell.  
What 'twas ambition for I know not well.

## NO ONE CARES LESS THAN I

“ No one cares less than I,  
Nobody knows but God,  
Whether I am destined to lie  
Under a foreign clod,”  
Were the words I made to the bugle call in the  
morning.

But laughing, storming, scorning,  
Only the bugles know  
What the bugles say in the morning,  
And they do not care, when they blow  
The call that I heard and made words to early this  
morning.

## ROADS

I LOVE roads :

The goddesses that dwell  
Far along invisible  
Are my favourite gods.

Roads go on  
While we forget, and are  
Forgotten like a star  
That shoots and is gone.

On this earth 'tis sure  
We men have not made  
Anything that doth fade  
So soon, so long endure :

The hill road wet with rain  
In the sun would not gleam  
Like a winding stream  
If we trod it not again.

They are lonely  
While we sleep, lonelier  
For lack of the traveller  
Who is now a dream only.

From dawn's twilight  
And all the clouds like sheep  
On the mountains of sleep  
They wind into the night.



The next turn may reveal  
Heaven : upon the crest  
The close pine clump, at rest  
And black, may Hell conceal.

Often footsore, never  
Yet of the road I weary,  
Though long and steep and dreary  
As it winds on for ever.

Helen of the roads,  
The mountain ways of Wales  
And the Mabinogion tales,  
Is one of the true gods,

Abiding in the trees,  
The threes and fours so wise,  
The larger companies,  
That by the roadside be,

And beneath the rafter  
Else uninhabited  
Excepting by the dead ;  
And it is her laughter

At morn and night I hear  
When the thrush cock sings  
Bright irrelevant things,  
And when the chanticleer

Calls back to their own night  
Troops that make loneliness  
With their light footsteps' press,  
As Helen's own are light.

Now all roads lead to France  
And heavy is the tread  
Of the living ; but the dead  
Returning lightly dance :

Whatever the road bring  
To me or take from me,  
They keep me company  
With their pattering,

Crowding the solitude  
Of the loops over the downs,  
Hushing the roar of towns  
And their brief multitude.

## THIS IS NO CASE OF PETTY RIGHT OR WRONG

THIS is no case of petty right or wrong  
That politicians or philosophers  
Can judge. I hate not Germans, nor grow hot  
With love of Englishmen, to please newspapers.  
Beside my hate for one fat patriot  
My hatred of the Kaiser is love true :—  
A kind of god he is, banging a gong.  
But I have not to choose between the two,  
Or between justice and injustice. Dinned  
With war and argument I read no more  
Than in the storm smoking along the wind  
Athwart the wood. Two witches' cauldrons roar.  
From one the weather shall rise clear and gay ;  
Out of the other an England beautiful  
And like her mother that died yesterday.  
Little I know or care if, being dull,  
I shall miss something that historians  
Can rake out of the ashes when perchance  
The phoenix broods serene above their ken.  
But with the best and meanest Englishmen  
I am one in crying, God save England, lest  
We lose what never slaves and cattle blessed.  
The ages made her that made us from the dust :  
She is all we know and live by, and we trust  
She is good and must endure, loving her so :  
And as we love ourselves we hate her foe.

## THE CHALK-PIT

"Is this the road that climbs above and bends  
Round what was once a chalk-pit : now it is  
By accident an amphitheatre.

Some ash-trees standing ankle-deep in brier  
And bramble act the parts, and neither speak  
Nor stir." "But see : they have fallen, every one,  
And brier and bramble have grown over them."

"That is the place. As usual no one is here.  
Hardly can I imagine the drop of the axe,  
And the smack that is like an echo, sounding here."

"I do not understand." "Why, what I mean is  
That I have seen the place two or three times  
At most, and that its emptiness and silence

And stillness haunt me, as if just before  
It was not empty, silent, still, but full  
Of life of some kind, perhaps tragical.

Has anything unusual happened here ? "

"Not that I know of. It is called the Dell.

They have not dug chalk here for a century.

That was the ash-trees' age. But I will ask."

"No. Do not. I prefer to make a tale,  
Or better leave it like the end of a play,  
Actors and audience and lights all gone ;

For so it looks now. In my memory  
Again and again I see it, strangely dark,  
And vacant of a life but just withdrawn.

We have not seen the woodman with the axe.  
Some ghost has left it now as we two came."

"And yet you doubted if this were the road ? "

“ Well, sometimes I have thought of it and failed  
To place it. No. And I am not quite sure,  
Even now, this is it. For another place,  
Real or painted, may have combined with it.  
Or I myself a long way back in time . . .”

“ Why, as to that, I used to meet a man—  
I had forgotten,—searching for birds’ nests  
Along the road and in the chalk-pit too.  
The wren’s hole was an eye that looked at him  
For recognition. Every nest he knew.  
He got a stiff neck, by looking this side or that,  
Spring after spring, he told me, with his laugh,—  
A sort of laugh. He was a visitor,  
A man of forty,—smoked and strolled about.  
At orts and crosses Pleasure and Pain had played  
On his brown features ;—I think both had lost ;—  
Mild and yet wild too. You may know the kind.  
And once or twice a woman shared his walks,  
A girl of twenty with a brown boy’s face,  
And hair brown as a thrush or as a nut,  
Thick eyebrows, glinting eyes—” “ You have  
said enough.

A pair,—free thought, free love,—I know the  
breed :

I shall not mix my fancies up with them.”

“ You please yourself. I should prefer the truth  
Or nothing. Here, in fact, is nothing at all  
Except a silent place that once rang loud,  
And trees and us—imperfect friends, we men  
And trees since time began ; and nevertheless  
Between us still we breed a mystery.”



## HEALTH

FOUR miles at a leap, over the dark hollow land,  
To the frosted steep of the down and its junipers  
black,

Travels my eye with equal ease and delight :  
And scarce could my body leap four yards.

This is the best and the worst of it—  
Never to know,  
Yet to imagine gloriously, pure health.

To-day, had I suddenly health,  
I could not satisfy the desire of my heart  
Unless health abated it,  
So beautiful is the air in its softness and clearness,  
while Spring  
Promises all and fails in nothing as yet ;  
And what blue and what white is I never knew  
Before I saw this sky blessing the land.

For had I health I could not ride or run or fly  
So far or so rapidly over the land  
As I desire : I should reach Wiltshire tired ;  
I should have changed my mind before I could be  
in Wales.

I could not love ; I could not command love.  
Beauty would still be far off  
However many hills I climbed over ;  
Peace would still be farther.



Maybe I should not count it anything  
To leap these four miles with the eye ;  
And either I should not be filled almost to bursting  
    with desire,  
Or with my power desire would still keep pace.

Yet I am not satisfied  
Even with knowing I never could be satisfied.  
With health and all the power that lies  
In maiden beauty, poet and warrior,  
In Cæsar, Shakespeare, Alcibiades,  
Mazeppa, Leonardo, Michelangelo,  
In any maiden whose smile is lovelier  
Than sunlight upon dew,  
I could not be as the wagtail running up and down  
The warm tiles of the roof slope, twittering  
Happily and sweetly as if the sun itself  
Extracted the song  
As the hand makes sparks from the fur of a cat :

I could not be as the sun.  
Nor should I be content to be  
As little as the bird or as mighty as the sun.  
For the bird knows not of the sun,  
And the sun regards not the bird.  
But I am almost proud to love both bird and sun,  
Though scarce this Spring could my body leap  
    four yards.

## BEAUTY

WHAT does it mean ? Tired, angry, and ill at ease,  
No man, woman, or child alive could please  
Me now. And yet I almost dare to laugh  
Because I sit and frame an epitaph—  
“ Here lies all that no one loved of him  
And that loved no one.” Then in a trice that  
whim

Has wearied. But, though I am like a river  
At fall of evening while it seems that never  
Has the sun lighted it or warmed it, while  
Cross breezes cut the surface to a file,  
This heart, some fraction of me, happily  
Floats through the window even now to a tree  
Down in the misting, dim-lit, quiet vale,  
Not like a pewit that returns to wail  
For something it has lost, but like a dove  
That slants unswerving to its home and love.  
There I find my rest, and through the dusk air  
Flies what yet lives in me. Beauty is there.

## SNOW

IN the gloom of whiteness,  
In the great silence of snow,  
A child was sighing  
And bitterly saying : " Oh,  
They have killed a white bird up there on her nest,  
The down is fluttering from her breast."  
And still it fell through that dusky brightness  
On the child crying for the bird of the snow.

## THE NEW YEAR

HE was the one man I met up in the woods  
That stormy New Year's morning ; and at first  
sight,

Fifty yards off, I could not tell how much  
Of the strange tripod was a man. His body,  
Bowed horizontal, was supported equally  
By legs at one end, by a rake at the other :  
Thus he rested, far less like a man than  
His wheel-barrow in profile was like a pig.

But when I saw it was an old man bent,  
At the same moment came into my mind  
The games at which boys bend thus, *High-*  
*cockolorum*,

Or *Fly-the-garter*, and *Leap-frog*. At the sound  
Of footsteps he began to straighten himself ;  
His head rolled under his cape like a tortoise's ;  
He took an unlit pipe out of his mouth  
Politely ere I wished him " A Happy New Year,"  
And with his head cast upward sideways  
muttered—

So far as I could hear through the trees' roar—  
" Happy New Year, and may it come fastish, too,"  
While I strode by and he turned to raking leaves.

## THE BROOK

SEATED once by a brook, watching a child  
Chiefly that paddled, I was thus beguiled.  
Mellow the blackbird sang and sharp the thrush  
Not far off in the oak and hazel brush,  
Unseen. There was a scent like honeycomb  
From mugwort dull. And down upon the dome  
Of the stone the cart-horse kicks against so oft  
A butterfly alighted. From aloft  
He took the heat of the sun, and from below.  
On the hot stone he perched contented so,  
As if never a cart would pass again  
That way ; as if I were the last of men  
And he the first of insects to have earth  
And sun together and to know their worth.  
I was divided between him and the gleam,  
The motion, and the voices, of the stream,  
The waters running frizzled over gravel,  
That never vanish and for ever travel.  
A grey flycatcher silent on a fence  
And I sat as if we had been there since  
The horseman and the horse lying beneath  
The fir-tree-covered barrow on the heath,  
The horseman and the horse with silver shoes,  
Galloped the downs last. All that I could lose  
I lost. And then the child's voice raised the dead.  
“ No one's been here before ” was what she said  
And what I felt, yet never should have found  
A word for, while I gathered sight and sound.



## THE OTHER

THE forest ended. Glad I was  
To feel the light, and hear the hum  
Of bees, and smell the drying grass  
And the sweet mint, because I had come  
To an end of forest, and because  
Here was both road and inn, the sum  
Of what's not forest. But 'twas here  
They asked me if I did not pass  
Yesterday this way? "Not you? Queer."  
"Who then? and slept here?" I felt fear.

I learnt his road and, ere they were  
Sure I was I, left the dark wood  
Behind, kestrel and woodpecker,  
The inn in the sun, the happy mood  
When first I tasted sunlight there.  
I travelled fast, in hopes I should  
Outrun that other. What to do  
When caught, I planned not. I pursued  
To prove the likeness, and, if true,  
To watch until myself I knew.

I tried the inns that evening  
Of a long gabled high-street grey,  
Of courts and outskirts, travelling  
An eager but a weary way,  
In vain. He was not there. Nothing  
Told me that ever till that day  
Had one like me entered those doors,  
Save once. That time I dared: "You may  
Recall"—but never-foamless shores  
Make better friends than those dull boors.



Many and many a day like this  
Aimed at the unseen moving goal  
And nothing found but remedies  
For all desire. These made not whole ;  
They sowed a new desire, to kiss  
Desire's self beyond control,  
Desire of desire. And yet  
Life stayed on within my soul.  
One night in sheltering from the wet  
I quite forgot I could forget.

A customer, then the landlady  
Stared at me. With a kind of smile  
They hesitated awkwardly :  
Their silence gave me time for guile.  
Had anyone called there like me,  
I asked. It was quite plain the wile  
Succeeded. For they poured out all.  
And that was naught. Less than a mile  
Beyond the inn, I could recall  
He was like me in general.

He had pleased them, but I less.  
I was more eager than before  
To find him out and to confess,  
To bore him and to let him bore.  
I could not wait : children might guess  
I had a purpose, something more  
That made an answer indiscreet.  
One girl's caution made me sore,  
Too indignant even to greet  
That other had we chanced to meet.

I sought then in solitude.  
The wind had fallen with the night ; as still  
The roads lay as the ploughland rude,  
Dark and naked, on the hill.  
Had there been ever any feud  
'Twixt earth and sky, a mighty will  
Closed it : the crocketed dark trees,  
A dark house, dark impossible  
Cloud-towers, one star, one lamp, one peace  
Held on an everlasting lease :

And all was earth's, or all was sky's ;  
No difference endured between  
The two. A dog barked on a hidden rise ;  
A marshbird whistled high unseen ;  
The latest waking blackbird's cries  
Perished upon the silence keen.  
The last light filled a narrow firth  
Among the clouds. I stood serene,  
And with a solemn quiet mirth,  
An old inhabitant of earth.

Once the name I gave to hours  
Like this was melancholy, when  
It was not happiness and powers  
Coming like exiles home again,  
And weaknesses quitting their bowers,  
Smiled and enjoyed, far off from men,  
Moments of everlastingness.  
And fortunate my search was then  
While what I sought, nevertheless,  
That I was seeking, I did not guess.

That time was brief : once more at inn  
And upon road I sought my man  
Till once amid a tap-room's din  
Loudly he asked for me, began  
To speak, as if it had been a sin,  
Of how I thought and dreamed and ran  
After him thus, day after day :  
He lived as one under a ban  
For this : what had I got to say ?  
I said nothing. I slipped away.

And now I dare not follow after  
Too close. I try to keep in sight,  
Dreading his frown and worse his laughter.  
I steal out of the wood to light ;  
I see the swift shoot from the rafter  
By the inn door : ere I alight  
I wait and hear the starlings wheeze  
And nibble like ducks : I wait his flight.  
He goes : I follow : no release  
Until he ceases. Then I also shall cease.

## HOUSE AND MAN

ONE hour: as dim he and his house now look  
As a reflection in a rippling brook,  
While I remember him; but first, his house.  
Empty it sounded. It was dark with forest boughs  
That brushed the walls and made the mossy tiles  
Part of the squirrels' track. In all those miles  
Of forest silence and forest murmur, only  
One house—"Lonely!" he said, "I wish it were  
lonely"—

Which the trees looked upon from every side,  
And that was his.

He waved good-bye to hide  
A sigh that he converted to a laugh.  
He seemed to hang rather than stand there, half  
Ghost-like, half like a beggar's rag, clean wrung  
And useless on the brier where it has hung  
Long years a-washing by sun and wind and rain.

But why I call back man and house again  
Is that now on a beech-tree's tip I see  
As then I saw—I at the gate, and he  
In the house darkness,—a magpie veering about,  
A magpie like a weathercock in doubt.

## THE GYPSY

A FORTNIGHT before Christmas Gypsies were everywhere :

Vans were drawn up on wastes, women trailed to the fair.

" My gentleman," said one, " You've got a lucky face."

" And you've a luckier," I thought, " if such a grace  
And impudence in rags are lucky." " Give a penny  
For the poor baby's sake." " Indeed I have not any  
Unless you can give change for a sovereign, my  
dear."

" Then just half a pipeful of tobacco can you  
spare ? "

I gave it. With that much victory she laughed  
content.

I should have given more, but off and away she  
went

With her baby and her pink sham flowers to rejoin  
The rest before I could translate to its proper coin  
Gratitude for her grace. And I paid nothing then,  
As I pay nothing now with the dipping of my pen  
For her brother's music when he drummed the  
tambourine

And stamped his feet, which made the workmen  
passing grin,

While his mouth-organ changed to a rascally  
Bacchanal dance

" Over the hills and far away." This and his glance  
Outlasted all the fair, farmer and auctioneer,



Cheap-jack, balloon-man, drover with crooked  
stick, and steer,

Pig, turkey, goose, and duck, Christmas Corpses  
to be.

Not even the kneeling ox had eyes like the Romany.  
That night he peopled for me the hollow wooded  
land,

More dark and wild than stormiest heavens, that I  
searched and scanned

Like a ghost new-arrived. The gradations of the  
dark

Were like an underworld of death, but for the spark  
In the Gypsy boy's black eyes as he played and  
stamped his tune,

"Over the hills and far away," and a crescent moon



## MAN AND DOG

“ 'TWILL take some getting.” “ Sir, I think 'twill so.”

The old man stared up at the mistletoe  
That hung too high in the poplar's crest for plunder  
Of any climber, though not for kissing under :  
Then he went on against the north-east wind—  
Straight but lame, leaning on a staff new-skinned,  
Carrying a brolly, flag-basket, and old coat,—  
Towards Alton, ten miles off. And he had not  
Done less from Chilgrove where he pulled up docks.  
'Twere best, if he had had “ a money-box,”  
To have waited there till the sheep cleared a field  
For what a half-week's flint-picking would yield.  
His mind was running on the work he had done  
Since he left Christchurch in the New Forest, one  
Spring in the 'seventies,—navvying on dock and  
line

From Southampton to Newcastle-on-Tyne,—  
In 'seventy-four a year of soldiering  
With the Berkshires,—hoeing and harvesting  
In half the shires where corn and couch will grow.  
His sons, three sons, were fighting, but the hoe  
And reap-hook he liked, or anything to do with  
trees.

He fell once from a poplar tall as these :  
The Flying Man they called him in hospital.  
“ If I flew now, to another world I'd fall.”  
He laughed and whistled to the small brown bitch  
With spots of blue that hunted in the ditch.

Her foxy Welsh grandfather must have paired  
Beneath him. He kept sheep in Wales and scared  
Strangers, I will warrant, with his pearl eye  
And trick of shrinking off as he were shy,  
Then following close in silence for—for what ?  
“ No rabbit, never fear, she ever got,  
Yet always hunts. To-day she nearly had one :  
She would and she wouldn't. 'Twas like that. The  
bad one !

She's not much use, but still she's company,  
Though I'm not. She goes everywhere with me.  
So Alton I must reach to-night somehow :  
I'll get no shakedown with that bedfellow  
From farmers. Many a man sleeps worse to-night  
Than I shall.” “ In the trenches.” “ Yes, that's  
right.

But they'll be out of that—I hope they be—  
This weather, marching after the enemy.”

“ And so I hope. Good luck.” And there I nodded  
“ Good-night. You keep straight on.” Stiffly he  
plodded ;

And at his heels the crisp leaves scurried fast,  
And the leaf-coloured robin watched. They  
passed,

The robin till next day, the man for good,  
Together in the twilight of the wood.

## A PRIVATE

THIS ploughman dead in battle slept out of doors  
Many a frozen night, and merrily  
Answered staid drinkers, good bedmen, and all  
bores :

“ At Mrs. Greenland’s Hawthorn Bush,” said he,  
“ I slept.” None knew which bush. Above the  
town,

Beyond “ The Drover,” a hundred spot the down  
In Wiltshire. And where now at last he sleeps  
More sound in France—that, too, he secret keeps.

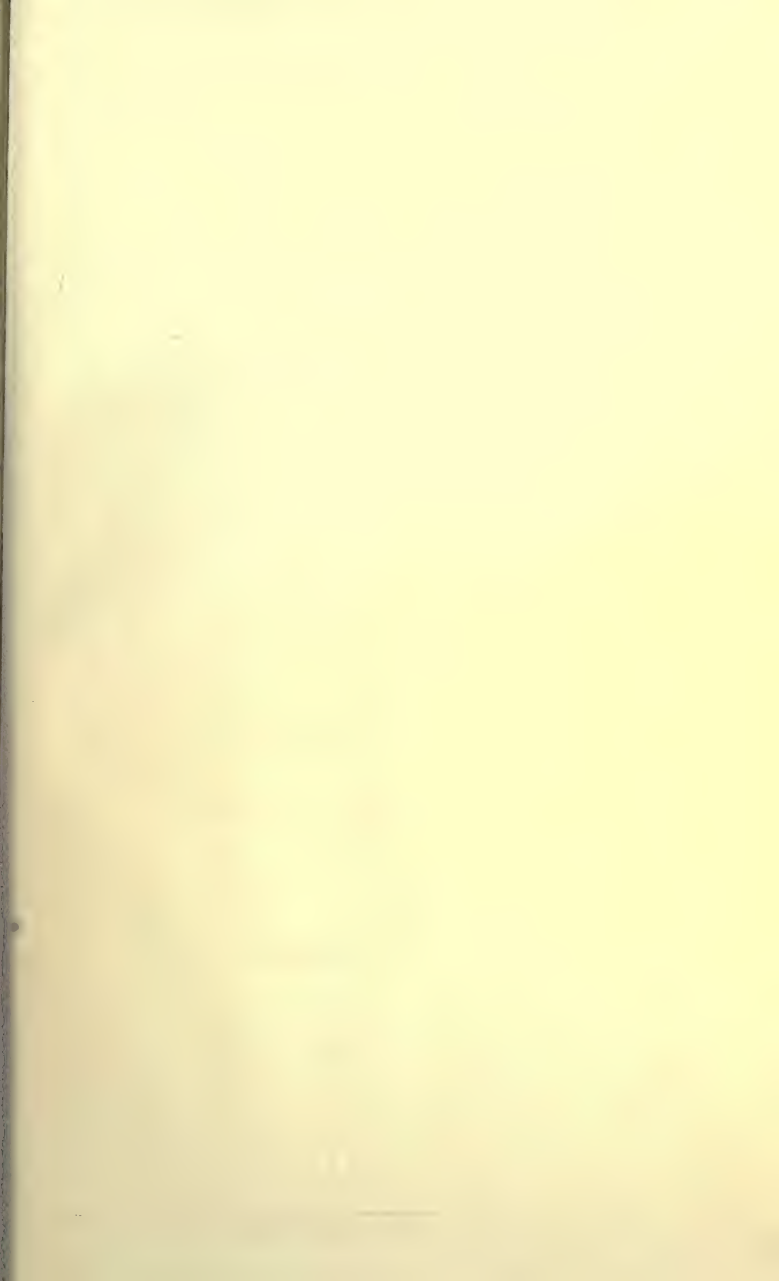
## OUT IN THE DARK

Out in the dark over the snow  
The fallow fawns invisible go  
With the fallow doe ;  
And the winds blow  
Fast as the stars are slow.

Stealthily the dark haunts round  
And, when a lamp goes, without sound  
At a swifter bound  
Than the swiftest hound,  
Arrives, and all else is drowned ;

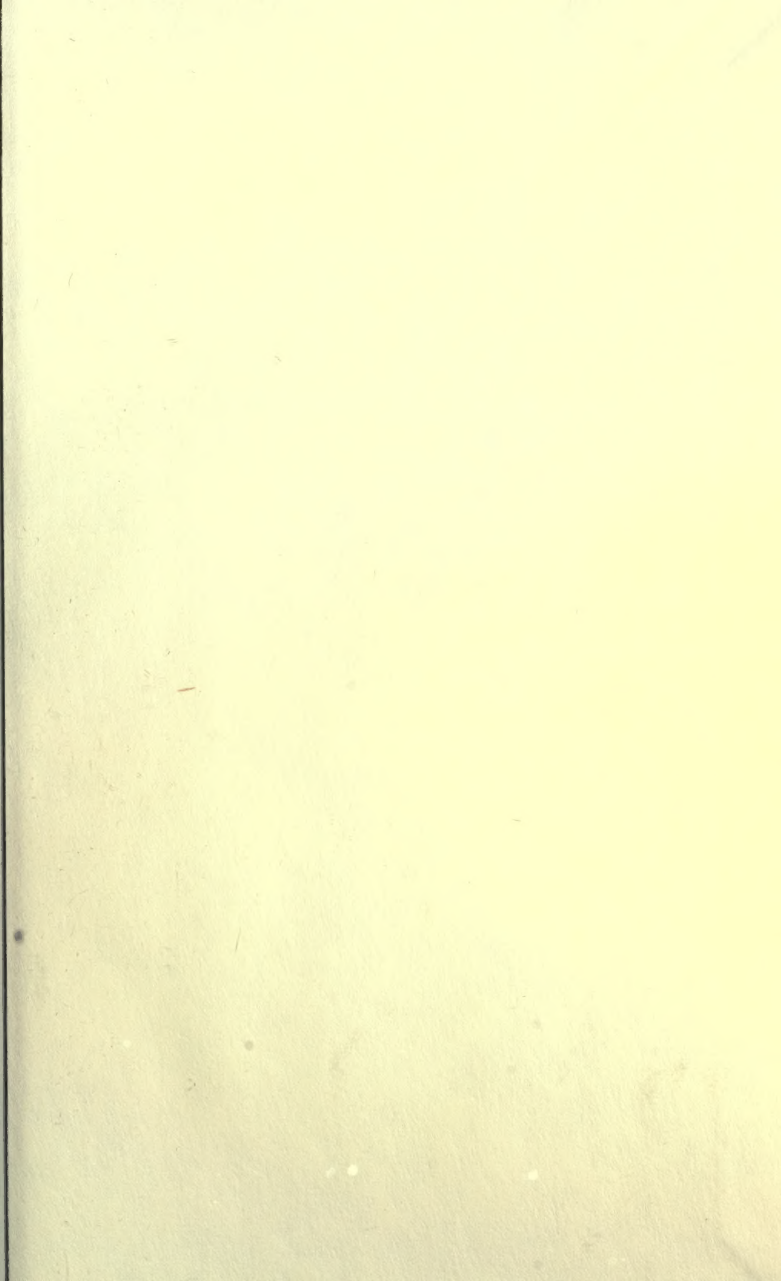
And I and star and wind and deer,  
Are in the dark together,—near,  
Yet far,—and fear  
Drums on my ear  
In that sage company drear.

How weak and little is the light,  
All the universe of sight,  
Love and delight,  
Before the might,  
If you love it not, of night.











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